



**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Office of Multifamily Programs**

Neighborhood Networks Center Classification Guide

Delivering Technology Access to America's Communities



What Neighborhood Networks Centers Need to Know About... *Center Classification*

Classification Changes

On June 27, 2005, HUD's Multifamily Neighborhood Networks (NN) Initiative changed the way NN centers are classified. Neighborhood Networks introduced three levels of classification corresponding to three different levels of achievement: Designated (Level 1), Certified (Level 2), and Model (Level 3).

The Three Classification Levels

- The **Designated (Level 1)** center classification establishes minimum achievable standards for NN centers. This designation denotes that the center has the tools leading to effectiveness in creating programs and services to support the self-sufficiency of residents of FHA insured and assisted properties and the sustainability of the center.
- The **Certified (Level 2)** Multifamily NN centers have achieved and exceeded **Designated** status, and actively operate programs designed to support residents' self-sufficiency.
- The **Model (Level 3)** Multifamily NN center classification is based on a combination of achievements of **Designated** and **Certified** standards, and additionally, achievement of mandatory **Model** standards (see pages 3–4). **Model** Multifamily NN centers serve as centers of excellence for the entire Neighborhood Networks initiative.

Classification Implementation

Once this plan was implemented on June 27, 2005, all existing Multifamily Neighborhood Networks centers were classified as Designated (Level 1) centers. NN centers satisfying Level 2 requirements will be subsequently classified as Certified centers. All new centers opened after June 27, 2005, must meet Designated (Level 1) requirements to be classified as Designated.

A special window of opportunity currently allows Certified (Level 2) centers to apply immediately for Model (Level 3) status via START, the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool. Model Standard 1 is adjusted indefinitely. During this period, Certified centers applying for Model status will need:

- To have been operational for three years.
- One HUD-approved START business plan.
- One HUD-accepted Assessment Report.
- To have achieved Model Standards 2–7 as listed on pages 3 and 4.



Classification Level Requirements

Designated (Level 1) Multifamily Neighborhood Networks centers must have:

- A HUD-approved START business plan.
- A letter from the center stating they are operational.
- At least one computer with Internet access.

Centers wishing to advance to **Certified (Level 2)** will need:

- To have achieved Designated status prior to application for Certified status.
- A HUD-approved business plan using START.
- To have been operational for 12 consecutive months.
- A HUD-accepted *Center Assessment and Evaluation* using START.

Model (Level 3) Multifamily Neighborhood Networks classification is based on:

- Achievement of the Designated and Certified standards.
- Achievement of Model standards (refer to pages 3–4).

How Do Multifamily Neighborhood Networks Centers Benefit From Classification?

Success. While no two Neighborhood Networks centers are alike, more than 10 years of successfully delivering technology access and other resources to America's communities have revealed a number of factors that lead to center sustainability and success. The standards used for Designated, Certified and Model status are based on review and analysis of those factors. By following the classification guidelines, centers will be more likely to experience success in both aiding residents and increasing market value of their property.

Rewards. Achievement of Certified and Model standards can be a useful tool for center public relations, and be included in marketing materials, press releases, and other printed materials. Additionally, Multifamily Neighborhood Networks centers achieving Certified and Model Status will be offered special incentives, such as opportunities to be identified on the national Web site, chances to serve as pilot project sites, special recognition during Neighborhood Networks Week, and highlights in Neighborhood Networks publications.

Identity. Classification sends a distinct message to the outside world—Neighborhood Networks is a national initiative of like-minded organizations committed to the goal of empowering residents of FHA insured and assisted properties and the surrounding communities. This approach will garner increased benefits for NN centers from external stakeholders inspired to partner with such a dedicated and structured movement.

Recognition. Classification will provide much-needed and well-deserved recognition at all levels to centers (and their involved stakeholders), particularly those centers that perform above the standard. Simultaneously, classification encourages those centers by acknowledging their current accomplishments and presenting “model” examples of potential and possibility.



Model Standards

There are nine Model standards, of which seven are mandatory. The chart on pages 3–4 lists each standard along with an explanation and the documentation that is required.

Model Standards

Standard	Explanation	Documentation Required
<i>Standard 1, Period of Operation, Mandatory.</i> The center has been operational for 3 years.	The center has been a Certified center for at least 2 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One HUD-approved business plan. • One updated START business plan. • Three HUD-accepted Assessment Reports.
<i>Standard 2, Resident Involvement, Mandatory.</i> The center conducts resident surveys at least once every 3 years. The survey results are used to guide the choices of programs and services at the center.	Sufficient input from residents (the target population) is required to determine what programs and services would be valued and used by residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial resident survey was completed and data entered into START. • A follow-up resident survey was completed within 3 years and data from the follow-up survey was entered into START. • Listings of programs and services offered within the past 3 years.
<i>Standard 3, Program Guidelines, Mandatory.</i> Training and other programs shall include written curriculum or program guidelines.	Programs and services offered should be guided by a written curriculum or program guidelines to ensure structure, organization, and outcomes. Programs and services providing adult workforce development should track and report the types of jobs obtained by participants. When afterschool programming is provided, parent and school input should be sought to assess student needs, grades, test scores and progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of curriculum or program guidelines for each program. • A written summary describing program outcomes.
<i>Standard 4, Tracking, Evaluation and Reporting, Mandatory.</i> The center has a system that tracks, evaluates, and reports the results of the center's program activities to improve program performance and outcomes and increase resident participation.	Systems are in place to track, evaluate, and report program outcomes; to determine whether outcomes meet expectations; whether improvement is needed; and to increase the participation of residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the center's system for tracking, evaluating, and reporting on the center programs. • Description of how information collected is used to improve performance and outcomes and increase resident participation.
<i>Standard 5, Partnerships, Mandatory.</i> The center is actively engaged with a minimum of two partner entities.	The center has active involvement with at least two partner entities. The center has entered into and maintains partnership agreements that specify roles, responsibilities, and services to be provided during a specific time frame.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written partnership agreements specifying roles, responsibilities, and services to be provided.



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Standard 6, Funding, Mandatory. The center engages in fund development to increase financial sustainability.	The center uses a variety of fund development mechanisms to finance current and future operations. The center demonstrates the capacity to develop proposals to purchase equipment, operate center programs, and maintain staff. The center has submitted a minimum of three proposals in the past 3 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samples of proposals submitted over the past 3 years. • Sample materials from other types of fund raising efforts.
Standard 7, Center Environment, Mandatory. The center environment should include the following: (a) high-speed Internet access, (b) up-to-date and working equipment and operating systems, (c) accessible workspace and equipment, (d) implemented security features, (e) operational for at least 30 hours weekly, and (f) attractive and clean physical facilities.	The center environment, both facilities and equipment, should reflect the dignity and respect afforded to the educational process. Residents and equipment should be secure. The center should operate for sufficient number of hours to afford residents ample use of the facility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating statement that discusses items stated in the standard. • Interior and exterior photographs of the center.
Standard 8, 501(c)(3), Optional. The center has obtained 501(c)(3) status or is aligned with a 501(c)(3) organization.	501(c)(3) status permits center to seek and receive grants, contracts and tax-deductible donations, thereby increasing opportunities for sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of 501(c)(3) letter of designation from IRS or copy of 501(c)(3) letter of designation from IRS for organization with which center is aligned • Letter of alignment from that organization (if applicable).
Standard 9, Governance, Optional. A board of directors or similar body provides center governance.	A volunteer body representative of all stakeholders should guide center operations and the center's director. The board has regularly scheduled meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of governance body members and their affiliations. • Copies of meeting minutes.

Additional Information

For additional information about HUD's Multifamily Neighborhood Networks classification process, contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center's toll-free number at (888) 312-2743 or visit HUD's Multifamily Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org.

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